



## ESREA Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education

### Webinar Series 2021

# Critical Policy Research in Challenging Political Contexts

**The webinars will take place on Zoom. Register by 31 May.**

All researchers work in political environments. Recent contributions in various educational journals point to the growing significance of authoritarian and populist political movements and ideologies, and show concern about how this will influence policy research in adult education. However, it is far from clear that liberal notions of academic freedom are or have been the norm.

These webinars will explore how researchers can and do operate within different political environments and how they can negotiate the political challenges involved. The aim is to explore the impact of growing control – and “creeping authoritarianism” – in different countries today.

#### **Wed. 9 June 15:00-16:20 CET: “Critical Voices Between PIAAC and New Literacy Studies”**

Anke Grotlüschen & Lianne Heilmann, University of Hamburg.

Discussant: Lyn Tett, Huddersfield University.

Chair: Vida Mohorčič Špolar

Details and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/critical-voices-between-piaac-and-new-literacy-studies-tickets-151233115319>

#### **Fri. 11 June 15:00-16:20 CET: “Lifelong Learning, Global Social Justice and Sustainability”**

Peter Mayo, University of Malta & Leona English, St Francis Xavier University, Canada.

Discussant: Borut Mikulec, Univ. of Ljubljana.

Chair: Rosanna Barros.

Details and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lifelong-learning-global-social-justice-sustainability-tickets-151084127693>

#### **Wed. 16 June 15:00-16:20 CET “Study of Adult Education in Different Political Contexts & the Impact of Political Context on Research into Adult Education”**

Pepka Boyadjieva & Petya Ilieva-Trichkova, Institute of Philosophy & Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Discussant: Licínio C. Lima, Univ. of Minho.

Chair: John Holford.

Details and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/study-of-adult-education-in-different-political-contexts-tickets-151234920719>

**Wednesday 9 June**

**Critical Voices Between PIAAC and New Literacy Studies**

**Anke Grotlüschen & Lisanne Heilmann**

“New Literacy Studies” and similar critical perspectives claim that deficit views marginalize learners: understanding literacy as decontextualized and objective hides power relations and introduces a hierarchy between legitimate and vernacular literacies. From this standpoint, OECD surveys like the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) are problematic. Yet PIAAC also informs us about literacy and numeracy practices, and about what people do with their skills. It also illuminates inequalities and which countries are better at achieving labour market inclusion and trust in democratic institutions. We claim that PIAAC, made by economists, reflects the neo-liberal paradigm dominant in the OECD when it was developed, and marginalizes Southern countries; but that, re-interpreted using more critical theories, it can be of use for adult education, and especially for claiming better funding for marginalized groups.

*Anke Grotlüschen has been professor for lifelong learning at Hamburg University since 2008. She works on literacy research, and contributes critical perspective to mainstream discussions on competences.*

*Lisanne Heilmann works at Hamburg University, where she earned her doctorate in 2020. Her focus is on Literacy, the Subject and Power, which is intertwined with research on Gender and Vulnerability.*

*Lyn Tett (Discussant) is Professor Emerita at Edinburgh and Huddersfield universities. Her research includes the impact of neoliberal policy on pedagogy and practice in adult literacies, and practitioners’ responses to performativity regimes.*

## Friday 11 June

### Lifelong Learning, Global Social Justice and Sustainability

**Peter Mayo & Leona English**

Drawing on their recent book, *Lifelong Learning, Global Social Justice and Sustainability*, Peter Mayo and Leona English will discuss current neoliberal trends in learning. They critique neoliberal versions of lifelong learning, contrasting it with the notion of critical literacy, and the work of Paulo Freire. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, they draw on a gendered and intersectional perspective, arguing that configurations of social inequalities occur and take form within intersecting oppressions. With differing discursive locations, different people or groups have distinctive standpoints which need to be factored in when formulating policy. When developing lifelong learning policies and action, we must meet challenges concerning historically marginalized groups with our eyes wide open. Citizens need to remain politically alert in order to navigate the systems that are continuously shifting to privilege the already privileged.

***Peter Mayo** is Professor of Arts, Open Communities, & Adult Education at the University of Malta, and author or editor of over one hundred journal articles and book chapters, twenty-four books, and the Postcolonial Studies in Education book series.*

***Leona M. English** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University, Canada, former co-editor of Adult Education Quarterly, former President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, and former staff member of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg.*

*Their joint work includes Learning with Adults, winner of the Cyril O. Houle Award for Outstanding Literature in Adult Education.*

***Borut Mikulec** (Discussant) is Associate Professor for Adult Education at the University of Ljubljana. His research includes the role of transnational organisations in education policy, professionalization of adult educators, continuing vocational education and active citizenship. He is editor in chief of the journal Studies in Adult Education and Learning.*

**Wednesday 16 June**

**Study of adult education in different political contexts and the impact of political context on research into adult education**

**Pepka Boyadjieva & Petya Ilieva-Trichkova**

The study of adult education in different political contexts is based on the assumption that adult education practices and policies are embedded in social contexts. Theoretically, this presentation will build on Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional scale of justice: redistribution, recognition, and representation, focussing especially on the third dimension. Achieving this means that people have equal voices in decision-making processes on issues that directly affect their lives. We will discuss empirical evidence of the social embeddedness of accomplishing adult education as a common good in different political contexts, more concretely, in societies characterised with different levels of democracy (measured with Democracy Index), and how the democratic regime of a given country (full vs flawed democracy) mediates how inequality in access to adult education influences generalised and institutional trust .

***Pepka Boyadjieva** is Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Honorary Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Nottingham, and a member of the Editorial Boards of the International Journal of Lifelong Education and the British Educational Research Journal.*

***Petya Ilieva-Trichkova** is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria, holds a PhD from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, and is a member of the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Lifelong Education. Her research covers inequalities in access to higher education, lifelong learning and graduate employability.*

***Licínio C. Lima** (Discussant), author of over thirty books, is Professor at the Institute of Education, University of Minho, Portugal, where he has been Head of Adult Education, Director of the Research Centre for Education and Psychology, Head of Department, and Director of the PhD in Education.*